

**Amendments to the Claims**

Please cancel claims 1-4 without prejudice. Please add new claims 5-24 as shown below in the List of Claims.

**List of Claims**

- 1-4. Cancelled.
5. (New) A process for making a shaped article of silicon oxide, comprising:
  - a) preparing a sol from a silicon alcoxide;
  - b) allowing or inducing the hydrolysis of the sol prepared in step a);
  - c) adding colloidal silica to the sol that has undergone hydrolysis according to step b) to form a sol mixture;
  - d) pouring the sol mixture of step c) into a mould;
  - e) allowing the sol mixture in said mould to form a gel and then removing it from said mould;
  - f) drying the gel obtained in step e); and
  - g) thermally treating the gel dried in step f) at a temperature of 900°C-1500°C to increase its density.
6. (New) The process of claim 5, wherein steps a) to e) are carried out at room temperature.
7. (New) The process of claim 5, wherein the hydrolysis of step b) is induced using an acid or base catalyst.
8. (New) The process of claim 5, wherein said silicon alcoxide of step a) is either tetramethylortosilicate or tetraethylortosilicate.
9. (New) The process of claim 5, wherein the sol formed in step a) further comprises at least one element selected from group IIIa, IVa, Va, IIIb or Vb of the periodic table.
10. (New) The process of claim 9, wherein said element is germanium.

11. (New) The process of claim 10, wherein said germanium is in the form of a chloride salt.
12. (New) A shaped article made by the process of claim 5.
13. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.
14. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.
15. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.
16. (New) A shaped article made by the process of claim 9.
17. (New) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.
18. (New) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.
19. (New) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.
20. (New) A shaped article made by the process of claim 10.
21. (New) The shaped article of claim 10, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.
22. (New) An optical fiber made from the preform of claim 21.

23. (New) The shaped article of claim 20, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.
24. (New) The shaped article of claim 20, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.